



Testimony by Warren Cude, Vice President, District 6

Good morning, Chairman Darby, Vice Chair Morales, and members of the committee.

My name is Warren Cude, and I serve as Vice President and District 6 State Director for Texas Farm Bureau. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the interim charges regarding P-13 water wells.

Agriculture depends on clean and reliable groundwater. Water wells associated with oil and gas activities have long served important functions during exploration and production. However, some wells originally drilled for oil and gas development and later converted to water wells, are failing and creating pathways for contamination. In many cases, the landowner neither drilled the well nor caused the problem, yet they are left dealing with the consequences.

Texas Farm Bureau policy supports protecting both surface and groundwater from contamination associated with oil and gas activities. We have seen examples, particularly in West Texas, where deteriorated P-13 wells have allowed saltwater, hydrocarbons, and other oilfield wastes to migrate into the environment, creating long-term environmental concerns and costly remediation challenges. Even a single contaminated well can threaten domestic, livestock, and irrigation water supplies relied upon by neighboring landowners and agricultural producers.

Texas **must** address the question of responsibility. When a P-13 well is leaking oilfield waste or contaminating groundwater, the burden should not fall on a landowner who did not create the problem. Someone must be responsible for protecting groundwater and remediating contamination.

Texas Farm Bureau supports providing the Texas Railroad Commission with clear authority to hold the operator accountable and responsible for plugging the well if that plugging work failed. If no responsible operator can be identified, then the Railroad Commission should have the authority to take action and ensure the well is properly plugged and the contamination is addressed. Under current law, there is uncertainty regarding the Commission's authority over P-13 wells, leaving landowners caught in the middle and environmental risks unresolved.

Finally, I would emphasize the importance of dedicated funding.

Plugging abandoned and leaking P-13 wells is expensive, and delaying action only increases future costs. The longer contamination continues, the greater the risk to groundwater resources and the more expensive remediation becomes. Texas Farm Bureau policy specifically supports dedicated funding for plugging abandoned and orphaned wells, and P-13 water wells.

Groundwater is one of Texas' most valuable natural resources and the foundation of agricultural production across much of this state. Improperly plugged P-13 wells pose a preventable threat to that resource. Texas should ensure that responsible parties are held accountable whenever possible, provide the Railroad Commission with clear authority to address these wells, and establish adequate funding to protect landowners, agriculture, and future water supplies before these problems become even more costly and widespread.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.